

Overview of Requests Related to Children's Health, Safety, and Well-Being

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 350

Making our schools safe and healthy places to teach and to learn is essential to achieving our vision for public education in Washington. Few children achieve their academic potential if they feel unsafe or unsupported at school. In addition, children's lack of health and well-being across various domains continue to grow in significance as barriers to student learning, and schools are seen more and more as a potential delivery system to meet public health needs. Prevention, developmentally-appropriate early learning, effective planning, and training are tools to combat these difficulties; lack of sustained, predictable, and dedicated funding for school health, safety, and prevention efforts undermine schools' best attempts to keep up with increasing needs. When such needs are not addressed early in life, they emerge later in a child's education.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, through outreach to partners across the spectrum of children's early education and well-being, has taken action to improve these conditions, but needs Legislative support. This package of requests addresses the educational needs of infants, the early learning and care needs of young children, the health and safety needs of school students, and supports students' readiness and ability to learn.

Fiscal Summary

Operating Expenditures	FY 2006	FY 2007	Total
Restoring Purchasing Power of the School Nurse Corps	\$6,318,600	\$6,683,100	\$13,001,700
Keeping Students Safe Misconduct from School Employees	\$81,000	\$65,500	\$146,500
Supporting School's Safety Needs	\$4,936,700	\$4,936,700	\$9,873,400
School Readiness Assistance	\$405,200	\$379,900	\$785,100
Improving Breakfast Program Reimbursement	\$1,200,600	\$1,397,300	\$2,597,900
Investing in Environmental Safety of School Buildings	\$125,000	\$125,000	\$250,000
Total Cost	\$13,067,100	\$13,587,000	\$26,654,600

Short Descriptions

Restoring the Purchasing Power of the School Nurse Corps

Due to the shortage of nurses nationwide, wages for nurses have increased, causing the School Nurse Corps (SNC) to decrease nursing service hours to local school districts. These funded nursing service hours have decreased as the need for student health services and school district requirements for student health planning have increased. If this set of recommendations were funded, OSPI could restore the purchasing power of the SNC to maintain current level nursing services provided to the

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most needy school districts, increase nursing service levels to additional needy districts, and deliver training to nurses statewide to help meet the increasing health care needs of students. Superintendent Bergeson requests \$13 million for the 2005-07 biennium to support school nursing and improved student health.

Keeping Students Safe School Employee Misconduct

In order to preserve the safety of students in Washington's schools, the 2004 Legislature passed several laws that change local and state policies regarding how to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct by school employees. To effectively implement these new laws, we must assure that students across the state are offered protection in a uniform manner. To do so, the Superintendent seeks additional funding to provide statewide regional training on the new laws, and on-going staff support to manage the increased workload brought about by the new laws and by increased awareness and vigilance on the part of members of school communities. Superintendent Bergeson requests \$147,000 for the 2005-07 biennium to support implementation of new laws and statewide training regarding professional code of conduct violations.

Supporting Schools' Safety Needs

Making our schools safe places to teach and to learn is essential to achieving our vision for public education in Washington. Student learning is improved when schools are safe and supportive places to learn. Schools need support to create a positive social climate, to effectively plan for both predictable and unpredictable events, to coordinate with prevention experts, first responders, and others in their community, and to complete a host of specific tasks focused on student safety. Some of these tasks include: the state requirement to complete a Comprehensive Safe Schools Plan; high school security mapping; ongoing coordination with emergency response "homeland security" efforts; improving use of force policies and procedures; and preventing harassment, intimidation and bullying. Over the past decade schools and communities have concentrated resources on these efforts and other to schools safe and secure. However, as state and local safe schools resources have eroded, schools need dedicated state assistance to meet high expectations for both academic achievement and safety.

This request is to restore safety funding for all 296 school districts (including a "floor" or minimum allocation for small school districts) for staffing, training, and filling gaps in safety practices; to provide funding for a jointly-hired school safety consultant for each of the nine ESDs to establish regional expertise in school safety and to coordinate regional planning and training; and to reallocate statewide funding for school security personnel training, focused on key issues such as use of force policies and procedures, and disseminating 'lessons learned' from the School Mapping Project. Superintendent Bergeson requests \$9.9 million for the 2005-07 biennium to support school safety and planning efforts.

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Supporting Early Care and Education in Schools and Communities

Research shows that early childhood education is a key strategy for improving school performance and increasing student achievement. Educators, parents and business leaders increasingly understand that closing the achievement gap requires closing the preparation gap.

A 2004 survey of Washington State school districts indicates that 43 percent of districts surveyed are investing in early education strategies. These strategies include the provision of pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten programs, beyond what is required by law. Sixty-seven percent of districts which currently provide pre-k programs report that they have significant unmet demand. School district investment in early education is limited by the lack of stable funding as well as the lack of knowledge of best practices for delivering high quality early education in communities with different values and resources. The absence of a common set of learning standards, guidance regarding quality programs, coordinated curriculum and assessment, and adequate professional development activities across programs is a concern.

At the state level, district and community efforts to close the preparation gap must be supported through leadership, development of standards, tools, professional development activities and partnerships to make them successful. Superintendent Bergeson requests \$527,000 for the 2005-07 biennium to support districts' and private early learning programs.

Improving the Meals For Kids School Breakfast Reimbursement

Students who are hungry cannot learn. Recognizing this, the Legislature in 1993 began the Meals for Kids free and reduced-price breakfast program, which reimburses meals for children in need. School districts are participating in the program at higher rates, and responding to an increasing number of students eligible for the program. Inflation, and higher participation has eroded the per meal reimbursement significantly, serving as a disincentive for school district participation.

This proposal would increase the state funding for the Meals for Kids program. The estimated reimbursement in 2003-04 was \$0.12 per meal compared to 2002-03 reimbursement of \$0.13 per meal. This proposal increases the per meal reimbursement to \$0.15 per meal, which will provide funding relief to local school districts statewide. Superintendent Bergeson requests \$1.9 million for the 2005-07 biennium to improve breakfast reimbursement.

Investing in the Environmental Safety of School Buildings

More than 1 million children and more than 60,000 adults in Washington spend a significant portion of their days in public school buildings, some of which are old and inadequately maintained, and may contain environmental conditions that inhibit learning or may pose increased health risks.

This proposal is to increase the capacity of the OSPI and regional facility assistance to address these issues by coordinating the delivery of services and technical assistance

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to school districts around these issues. Agency staff would support school districts as they face complex school environmental health issues, such as: water quality, air quality, pesticides, soil contamination, mold, toxic substances, and other environmental concerns. Agency staff would also coordinate with the Department of Health, the State Board of Health, the State Board of Education and other organizations and partners, on efforts related to current facilities and new construction. Superintendent Bergeson requests \$250,000 for the 2005-07 biennium to support technical assistance for schools related to environmental health.